



Bristol Rural News

Gloucester and Bristol Diocesan Association of Church Bellringers

The Newsletter of Bristol Rural Branch Bellringers

No 290

Website: www.bristolrural.co.uk email: bristolrural@bristolrural.co.uk

Headlines

- 1 Branch Quiz—Iron Acton—11th February, 1900 onwards
- 2 Branch Practice—Pucklechurch—25th February, 1430-1630
- 3 Association Spring Training Day—11th March
- 4 Branch Practice—Warmley—25th March, 1430-1630

February— March 2023

Editor's Note

Just one message—don't forget to book your choice of food for the Branch Quiz, not later than the 5th February (see the attached poster with details).

Syston

I received this from Julie Scudamore—a well deserved thank you to Mervyn Gibbs for long service:

Today we celebrated the retirement of Mervyn as Tower Captain of Syston after 23 years. We had an excellent morning of ringing followed by hot sausage rolls and mince pies.



Glenn making the presentation to Mervyn

We would like to thank Mervyn for all his hard work over the years and for always warming up the tower for us on cold mornings!!!!

Glenn Laurence will take over the reins as Tower Captain and ringers are most welcome to join us on Friday mornings from 10am to 11.30am followed by refreshments.

Julie Scudamore

Dodgers' Outing

The Ringing Dodgers meet on the third Thursday of the month, which this January was a beautiful cold and sunny day. We started at Down Ampney, a ring of five and home of the composer Ralph Vaughan Williams. We then moved on to the awkward eight at Stratton St. Margaret before lunch at a pub in one of the ever expanding suburbs of Swindon (tricky to find this one!). After lunch we rang the six at Rodbourne Cheney before finishing at Shellingford near Faringdon, which has recently been augmented to a six. As always it was fun facing the challenges of different sets of bells and of course the socialising was an important part of the day.



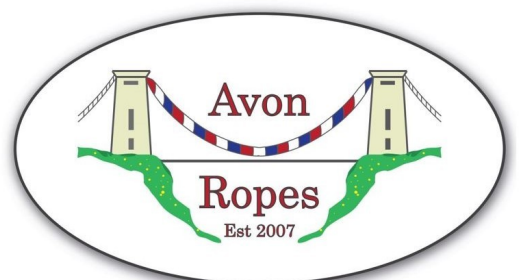
Down Ampney on a frosty morning

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Please see our website, www.avonropes.co.uk, our Facebook page or phone on 07946 605 963.

We're local too, based in Mangotsfield.



In February we are heading in the direction of Hereford and you would be welcome to join us.

Chris Greef

Stedman Doubles Training

It was a cold and frosty morning in January when we gathered at Wapley for a training session on Stedman Doubles. We had five students, including one from the University ringing society, and an ample band of helpers to fill in, stand behind the students, and offer advice in between ringing sessions. At the outset, some had never rung Stedman at all, whilst others were confident in plain courses and wanted to learn how to ring singles. At the end all had made progress in what is a very popular and attractive method, or should I say principle?

Chris Greef

Church Bells: Music or Chaos?

Someone drew my attention to an article discussing whether the sound of church bells can be considered as music. Here is a reduced version:

English change-ringing, one of the earliest forms of purely abstract art, has pealed out from around six thousand British churches for over five hundred years: abstract, but also deeply communicative and full of sentiment.

It is a strange paradox that something so abstract and without melodic or harmonic qualities can at the same time be so reminiscent of such contrasting emotions: the mournful sadness of muffled funeral peals, the joyful 'firing' of all bells at once on the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve, the sheer mathematical orderliness of a well struck ten-bell method, as well as the musical moment when the village bells suddenly strike up as the bride and bridegroom step outside the church. Another paradox is that the complexity and basic technology of the 'exercise' - as the practice is called by ringers - is so little known even to churchgoers. But to do this here would take up too much space when the intention is to concentrate on why our unique, full-circle English ringing has claims to be a true music of its own and not a mere cacophony of random sound.

But is change-ringing music? Ordinary parish ringers rarely take time out digressing on the finer musical points of the exercise (they are too intent on making sure their striking is in proper order, if they're not

hastening away to the pub next door). Some people who live close to church towers argue fiercely that change-ringing is noise, not music. This is especially the case when learners are practising this difficult art and the quality of striking is poor. Others are thrilled by the sound. One person after hearing a long peal at my own church said she didn't want it to stop, but to go on forever. But what is English change-ringing - and what can we say about its 'music' or musicality?

All ringing methods begin and end in rounds. From this beginning each bell can move only one space forward or backward at a time, and from this we can recognize that these changes are not chaotic but completely orderly in their sequences. They are abstract in the sense that no simple melodic effects are possible. There is no scope for personal expression, only good or bad, accurate or inaccurate striking. So how can such a strict, virtually mechanical discipline of sound - without any interpretative possibility - be music, or musical, when the only variable is the speed of the striking controlled by the conductor?

Change-ringing stretches our credulity in more ways than one. Few people realize how great is the mental as well as physical concentration involved in ringing - let alone conducting - a continuous true peal of five thousand changes that can, without a single fault, last three or four hours. And then there are double and triple peals and even a record-breaking quadruple peal of over 20,000 changes.

On a more serious note, the tower conductor in my own parish church feels that our ringing exuberantly declares 'the church is still alive, come and join us in praise and gratitude of all creation'.

Original article by Graham Carey

Ringling Books Available

Bill Liebow has some books and badges available at cost as below. Please contact him if you are interested:

The One per Learner Book (the little yellow book, ideal for learners for logging progress in early stages) - £1 each.

Ringling Circles (gives the blue line and details of what happens at calls for some standard methods) - some left at £3.50 each.

Big Wilf's Bell Muffles

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We have Velcro fitting Bell Muffles at over 1000 churches and we're now based in Mangotsfield. Please see our website, www.bigwilfsbellmuffles.co.uk or our Facebook page or phone 07946 605 963.

Branch Ringing Achievements

Filton—1260 Grandsire Doubles

Rung in joyful anticipation of the Christingle Service in church.

Coalpit Heath—1260 Stedman Triples

First in method as conductor, Alison Holliday. A 60th birthday treat for the conductor with her thanks to all the band for coming out on this cold wet evening.



The band, with the birthday girl on the right

Almondsbury—1260 Doubles—Stedman, Plain Bob, St. Martin's, St. Simons

System—1260 Plain Bob Doubles

Dedicated to the memory of Frances Payne who sadly passed away this week aged 86. Frances was the mother of Julie Scudamore one of the bands members .

It's back ...

**BRISTOL RURAL
BRANCH QUIZ**

Quiz masters - Almondsbury

IRON ACTON VILLAGE HALL

SATURDAY 11th FEBRUARY

7pm

Come as a team

or as an individual & make up a team

£7 (Juniors £3)

To order your choice of food

please contact

Sue Elliott no later than 5th February

suehelliott@btinternet.com

Vegan chilli with rice or baked potato

Thai chicken curry with rice or baked potato

Beef chilli with rice or baked potato

Chicken Lasagne with salad and garlic bread.